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**Eradication of poverty and other development issues:
women in development**

Integrating a gender perspective into national development strategies

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 64/217 on women in development, the present report focuses on the integration of a gender perspective into national development strategies, supported by the United Nations system and donor countries. It highlights gender-responsive budgeting as a good practice in that regard. Recommendations are provided for consideration by the Assembly.

* A/66/150.



I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 64/217 on women in development, the General Assembly recognized the mutually reinforcing links between gender equality and poverty eradication and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. It also urged Member States and the United Nations system to empower women to participate actively and effectively in the development, implementation and evaluation of national development and/or poverty eradication policies, strategies and programmes.

2. The General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report on the implementation of the resolution at its sixty-sixth session, including on integrating a gender perspective into national development strategies. Based on inputs received from Member States and the United Nations system,¹ the present report reviews measures taken by Governments, support provided by the United Nations system, the role of donors and the new aid effectiveness agenda. It highlights gender-responsive budgeting and planning as a good practice example and concludes with recommendations for consideration by the Assembly.

II. Background

3. Despite progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals² as a result of economic growth in some developing countries and targeted efforts in some areas of the Goals, such as health and education, significant gaps remain between urban and rural areas and for those who are the most disadvantaged economically or because of sex, age, disability or ethnicity. Children from the poorest households, living in rural or in conflict areas, are the most likely not to be attending school, especially if they are girls. Access to secondary education remains restricted for girls in some regions. Higher levels of education are still critical in order for girls and women to acquire the necessary skills to meet current labour market demands.

4. Maternal deaths continue to be concentrated in sub-Saharan Africa and Southern Asia, which together accounted for 87 per cent of such deaths globally in 2007. In 2009, while women constituted 51.6 per cent of the population living with HIV globally, young women aged between 15 and 24 made up 60 per cent of people living with HIV within that age group.³

¹ Contributions were received from the Governments of: Denmark, El Salvador, Greece, Italy, Japan, Mexico, New Zealand, Norway, Spain and Togo. The following United Nations entities provided inputs: the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Bank.

² Unless otherwise noted, the data in the present report is drawn from *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2011* (New York, 2011).

³ UNICEF, *Opportunity in Crisis: Preventing HIV from Early Adolescence to Young Adulthood* (New York, 2011).

5. Worldwide, women's access to employment, resources and decision-making positions remains a challenge. The share of women in non-agricultural paid employment increased only five percentage points over almost two decades, from 35 per cent in 1990 to 40 per cent in 2009. Progress has been even slower in recent years, owing to the financial and economic crisis of 2008-2009. According to recent estimates, with the same access to productive resources as men, women could raise total agricultural output in developing countries by 2.5-4 per cent, reducing the number of hungry people in the world by 12-17 per cent.⁴ Over the past 15 years, the percentage of women parliamentarians increased only from 11.6 per cent in 1995 to 19.3 in 2011, with nine countries still having no women parliamentarians at all.

6. To overcome these challenges, Member States have repeatedly recognized that development, peace and security and human rights are interlinked and mutually reinforcing, and that promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women is a key development goal and an important means for achieving all of the Millennium Development Goals, including through the full and effective implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

7. During the 15-year review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in 2010 (see E/CN.6/2010/2), a number of common strategies were identified as being critical to the achievement of gender equality goals. These include the strengthening of the gender mainstreaming strategy to ensure that the needs and priorities of women and girls as well as men and boys are systematically and effectively taken into account in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies, strategies, plans and resource allocations across all policy areas, including national development strategies. Other positive factors for the achievement of gender equality goals include visible leadership, enhanced capacity-building in government bodies at all levels, stronger involvement of national mechanisms for gender equality in policymaking, increased allocation of gender-specific resources and development and the use of monitoring and accountability systems to track results.

8. Intergovernmental bodies have repeatedly reaffirmed the importance of gender-sensitive national policies for progress towards gender equality and the Millennium Development Goals. In the 2010 ministerial declaration of the Economic and Social Council, Member States committed to ensure that national development plans systematically contributed to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women. Similarly, in resolution 65/1, adopted at its High-level Plenary Meeting in 2010 on the Millennium Development Goals, the General Assembly recognized the need for gender mainstreaming in the formulation and implementation of development policies.

9. The Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020 (see A/CONF.219/3/Rev.1) includes objectives to guide national policies and international support measures for the achievement of sustained, equitable and inclusive economic growth. Gender equality and the empowerment of women is reflected as a priority area and as essential to progress towards social and human development and the eradication of poverty in least developed countries. Least developed countries committed to establishing and continuing to implement

⁴ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, *The State of Food and Agriculture: Women in Agriculture, Closing the Gender Gap for Development* (Rome, 2011).

national development plans that take into account the needs of women and girls. Commitments also addressed the strengthening of the role of relevant national mechanisms; scaling-up of resources for gender equality and the empowerment of women; and promotion of effective representation and participation of women in all spheres of decision-making. Development partners committed to providing financial and technical support in order to implement policies and programmes that enhance women's economic and income-generating opportunities, productive employment and access to productive resources.

10. To enhance the effectiveness of development assistance provided by the United Nations, the triennial comprehensive policy review (see General Assembly resolution 62/208) recognizes that there is no "one-size-fits-all" approach to development, and that United Nations development assistance should be aligned with national development plans and strategies. The resolution has a strong focus on implementation and provides detailed guidance in several areas, including gender equality and women's empowerment. The resolution calls for further alignment of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework cycle with national processes.

III. Integrating a gender perspective into national development policies and strategies

11. Drawing on inputs from both Member States and the United Nations system, section III sets out efforts made to integrate a gender perspective into national development policies and strategies, which are typically multi-year documents outlining national priorities for development, include poverty reduction strategies, country coordination mechanisms and sectoral plans such as rural development strategies. They are generally based on coordinated processes to achieve economic, social and environmental objectives and are guided by the principles of country ownership, integrated policies across sectors, broad participation, capacity development, a focus on outcomes and implementation, and means of implementation.

12. Building on the definition of gender mainstreaming in Economic and Social Council agreed conclusions 1997/2, integrating a gender perspective into national development planning and strategies entails assessing and analysing the situation of women and men in a given country, identifying specific obstacles to gender equality, systematically developing gender-sensitive strategies and programmes across sectors, and monitoring and evaluating outcomes, in order to achieve gender equality goals and address the inequalities faced by women and girls. While gender mainstreaming efforts are required across all sectors and in all stages of policymaking, those efforts need to be complemented by targeted interventions to address specific gaps or challenges faced by women and girls, as a necessary component of the two-pronged strategy for the promotion of gender equality.

13. Governments, with support from the United Nations system as requested, use different approaches to integrate a gender perspective into their development strategies. Increasingly, gender issues are identified as a priority or a cross-cutting issue that is systematically mainstreamed across all stages of policy development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

14. For instance, in El Salvador, the National Development Plan 2010-2014 incorporates gender as a cross-cutting issue and identifies poverty eradication and gender-based discrimination and violence among its priority areas. In Indonesia, the development workplan includes gender mainstreaming as one of the guiding principles in all national development programmes and activities.⁵ With a long-standing commitment to gender equality, New Zealand requires all Government agencies to base their policies on gender analysis. Gender implication statements are also required for all papers submitted to the Cabinet Social Policy Committee.

15. In other cases, countries dedicate a separate section in their national development strategies to specific priorities related to women and girls, such as education for girls, reproductive health, the participation of women in decision-making, and addressing violence against women. In its Eleventh National Five-Year Plan (2011-2015) the Syrian Arab Republic aims at reducing gender inequality and empowering women in sectors such as higher education, health and poverty reduction, but only partially in other sectors such as justice.⁶

16. In a number of countries, United Nations entities have provided support to national Governments to ensure the integration of a gender perspective during the implementation, monitoring and evaluation processes of national development strategies. For instance, UNDP supported more than 20 countries in the Asia Pacific region towards integrating a gender perspective in national planning and implementation frameworks in 2010. In 2009, UNDP, in collaboration with UNFPA, provided technical support to the Government of Maldives to ensure that a gender perspective was incorporated in its five-year national development strategy and in the monitoring and evaluation frameworks of the strategy. In the Republic of Moldova, UNDP supported gender mainstreaming into various development plans, including the national development strategy. UN-Women, in collaboration with UNFPA, provided technical support to the Government of Indonesia in the development of gender mainstreaming indicators for the national development plan. In Jordan, UNFPA, in collaboration with UNDP, supported the Government's efforts to strengthen the monitoring mechanisms for progress in achieving the Millennium Development Goals and national priorities, including goals related to gender equality and the empowerment of women.

17. Many countries have in place gender equality action plans that complement national development strategies, but the relationship between the two policy instruments differs greatly by country. Some countries take specific measures to align national action plans on gender equality with national development strategies. In other countries, national action plans on gender equality are included as a chapter in national development strategies. Experience suggests that the alignment of the two policy instruments is more successful when the gender equality action plan is formulated as a result of national and sectoral consultations or when explicit linkages are established outright during the formulation processes of both documents.⁷

⁵ ESCAP, *Strengthening National Mechanisms for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women: Regional Study — Asia and the Pacific* (Bangkok, 2010). Available from <http://www.unescap.org/sdd/publications/gender/2010-Regional-Study-on-NWM.pdf>.

⁶ Based on inputs from UN-Women.

⁷ Ibid.

18. National machineries for gender equality are essential components in all efforts to achieve gender equality. They commonly are responsible for promoting, supporting and monitoring the incorporation of gender perspectives in all policy areas, including national development strategies. They take the lead in developing and monitoring the implementation of gender equality plans, strategies and programmes. They are often responsible for coordinating and monitoring gender mainstreaming and capacity development across government bodies. Where national machineries work closely with civil society organizations, particularly women's organizations, and involve them in the development of national policies and strategies, there is a stronger collective voice to advocate for the key priorities that women are facing in the country. National machineries are also involved in strengthening the collection and analysis of sex-disaggregated data across sectors (see E/CN.6/2010/2).

19. It is therefore critical that national machineries for gender equality have at their disposal the resources, capacities and skills necessary to effectively discharge their mandates. A 2010 study on national mechanisms for gender equality found that achievements have been made on multiple fronts, including greater political visibility in achieving the goals of gender equality and the empowerment of women, increased use of the gender mainstreaming strategy across all regions, development of capacity in addressing gender equality issues, and improvements in data collection and analysis. However, national mechanisms for gender equality continue to face challenges in their roles as catalysts for gender mainstreaming, including marginalization within the governmental structure, frequent reorganization and change in leadership, diffuse and poorly designed mandates, limited staff and budgetary resources, inadequate technical expertise to address gender equality within both national mechanisms as well as other government bodies, weak coordination among various components of national mechanisms, ineffective monitoring and evaluation systems, and limited capacity in data collection and analysis.⁸

20. A number of Member States that submitted inputs for the present report provided examples of measures taken and results achieved by national mechanisms. The Salvadorean Institute for the Development of Women developed the 2011-2014 Women's National Policy in support of the national development plan. The Policy addresses women's economic empowerment as a key area, and aims at the elimination of all direct and indirect forms of discrimination within current labour and economic policy instruments.

21. In Fiji, the Women's Plan of Action (2009-2018), prepared by the Department of Women, includes policy objectives of the National Development Plan — Strategic Framework for Change, and the Pacific Platform for Action 2005-2015. The Plan provides a gender analysis of Government policies and programmes and identifies critical areas for action and appropriate strategies for the Government.

22. In Afghanistan, the Ministry of Women's Affairs integrated a gender perspective into programmes related to the national development strategy. As the Chair of three mechanisms within the national development strategy, the Ministry

⁸ Rounaq Jahan, "Strengthening national mechanisms for gender equality and the empowerment of women: a global synthesis study", prepared for the Division for the Advancement of Women (now UN-Women), (New York, 2010). Available from http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/TechnicalCooperation/GLOBAL_SYNTHESIS_REPORT_Dec%202010.pdf.

prepared the chapter on gender equality and conducted a final gender review of all other chapters, with the goal of addressing gender equality as a cross-cutting strategy.⁹ The Ministry, with the support from UN-Women, made efforts to operationalize the national action plan for women of Afghanistan, including by supporting line ministries and local governments in implementing their commitments under the Plan and monitoring its implementation in 18 line ministries.¹⁰

23. In New Zealand, the Ministry of Women's Affairs supports and advises Government agencies on policies that have a direct impact on women, and prioritizes its work on areas that need improvements, including increasing the number of women in leadership roles, combating violence against women, and achieving greater economic independence for all women. Similarly, in Australia, the Women's Interdepartmental Committee takes a whole-of-government approach to gender mainstreaming by ensuring that all policies, services and initiatives are gender-sensitive and by closely evaluating their impacts on women and men.¹¹

24. In Denmark, the Minister for Gender Equality is responsible for Government initiatives in the field of gender equality, through the coordination, development and implementation of Government policies. The Minister also advises Parliament on matters concerning gender equality.

25. In Italy, the Department of Equal Opportunities coordinated a project that provided 12 ministries with workshops and training courses on the integration of a gender perspective in various sectors. The project included support on developing social and economic policies that foster gender equality and the empowerment of women, and on building capacities in integrating a gender perspective in planning processes and policy design.

26. In some countries, line ministries cooperate with the national machineries for gender equality to integrate gender perspectives in sectoral policies and programmes. In Togo, the Ministry of Grass-roots Development, Crafts, Youth and Youth Employment works closely with the national machinery for gender equality and non-governmental organizations, including through awareness campaigns and capacity development. In its National Programme for Substantive Gender Equality (2010-2013), Greece calls for the cooperation between the General Secretariat for Gender Equality and other line ministries to mainstream a gender perspective across all sectors.

27. United Nations entities also supported the efforts of Member States to integrate a gender perspective into development plans across various sectors and areas such as health; employment; job and life skills training; human trafficking; reproductive health; the education and training of women, women's political participation and the human rights of women; leadership and decision-making; conflict resolution; and violence against women. UN-Women supported gender mainstreaming efforts across a variety of sectors through multiple channels, including by providing technical assistance to Member States, facilitating dialogue between Governments and civil society, collaborating with the national machineries

⁹ ESCAP, 2010.

¹⁰ Based on inputs from UN-Women.

¹¹ ESCAP, 2010.

for gender equality, and strengthening the capacity of civil society organizations, especially women's organizations.

28. Developing the capacity of staff and institutions, including through training, guidelines and other tools, is a key element towards ensuring that gender issues are more systematically reflected in national policies and their implementation. In Afghanistan, the Ministry of Women's Affairs provided guidance for the drafting of the national development strategy on mainstreaming gender. In Mexico, the Secretary for Social Development revised the operational rules for the country's different programmes to ensure gender-responsive implementation. New programmes are now expected to make explicit references to their contribution to promoting gender equality, through the gradual mainstreaming of a gender perspective and the collection and use of sex-disaggregated data and indicators on the beneficiaries and results of the programmes. In Senegal, the Gender Technical Committee, with representatives from the Government, civil society, and the United Nations Gender Theme Group, produced a note on the key issues that need to be addressed in order to integrate a gender perspective in the third poverty reduction strategy paper.

29. Integrating a gender perspective systematically into the design and implementation of national development strategies requires sector-level interventions as well as cross-sectoral approaches and partnerships among all stakeholders, including line ministries, development partners, civil society, women's networks and the private sector. For example, the Togo Ministry of Grass-roots Development, Crafts, Youth and Youth Employment organizes stakeholder forums on the development, implementation and monitoring of national development strategies every other year to review progress. The Government of Indonesia stipulates that women's groups be represented in the processes of development planning in order to ensure that women's concerns are incorporated in the national development planning process.¹²

30. In some countries, collaboration between the national machineries for gender equality and United Nations entities has ensured the participation of civil society and women's groups in the national development planning processes. For instance, in Ecuador, UN-Women worked with the national machineries to support and facilitate discussions between the Government and civil society. As a result, gender equality was well integrated in the National Plan for Good Living, which contains 46 policies aimed at achieving gender equality and a gender equality approach in 12 strategic objectives.¹³

31. In India, UN-Women, UNFPA and UNICEF, in collaboration with the Government, coordinated multiple consultations between the Government and women's organizations during the formulation of a five-year national development plan. That initiative enabled the incorporation of grass-roots women's priorities and needs in the five-year plan, and facilitated an open, participatory and transparent process.¹⁴

32. The effectiveness of national development strategies and gender equality action plans greatly depends on and benefits from the inclusion of annual targets

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Based on inputs from UN-Women.

¹⁴ Ibid.

that can be costed and that are accompanied by sufficient and sustainable budgets to implement them. In El Salvador, the law on equality and equity recognizes the need for adequate public resources to be approved in the next national public budget. The special law for women's right to a life free of violence mandates the allocation of public resources towards its implementation. The law provides that the Government, through the Ministry of Finance, must ensure annual budget allocations in the national budget to the institutions in charge of implementing the law.

A good practice example: gender-responsive budgeting and planning

33. In recent years, an increasing number of national Governments have taken concrete measures to support gender-responsive planning and budgeting in a systematic manner. Gender-responsive budgeting refers to Government planning, programming and budgeting that contribute to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women. It entails identifying the interventions needed to address gender equality gaps in Government policies and budgets, and monitoring and evaluating the financial resources allocated for the implementation of Government commitments on gender equality. Such efforts can help Governments decide whether and how policies need to be adjusted and where resources need to be reallocated for the achievement of gender equality goals.

34. Since it was first pioneered in Australia in the 1980s, gender-responsive budgeting has received growing attention from both Governments and non-governmental organizations. The interest intensified internationally when contributing Governments to the Beijing Platform for Action emphasized that Governments should make efforts to systematically review how women benefit from public sector expenditures, adjust budgets to ensure equality of access to public sector expenditures, and achieve the gender-related commitments made in other United Nations summits and conferences (see A/CONF.177/20/Rev.1, para. 346).

35. There are currently over 60 country initiatives for gender-responsive budgeting in all regions. A number of United Nations entities, including UNDP, UNFPA and UN-Women, are supporting gender-responsive budgeting initiatives worldwide. In 2008, UN-Women, in collaboration with the European Commission, initiated a programme aimed at integrating gender-responsive budgeting into the aid effectiveness agenda. During the initial phase of this three-year programme, research was carried out in 10 developing countries¹⁵ to investigate how gender-responsive budgeting tools and strategies have been used in the context of aid modalities. In the study, UN-Women and the European Community suggested that the integration of a gender perspective into national planning, budgeting, and monitoring and evaluation systems and instruments could enhance the effectiveness of aid in implementing gender equality objectives, through improved management and delivery of aid by the recipient countries. Thus, gender-responsive budgeting approaches needed to be applied to donor practices, national processes as well as joint coordination

¹⁵ Cameroon, Ethiopia, India, Morocco, Mozambique, Nepal, Peru, Rwanda, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania.

mechanisms.¹⁶ Based on the study findings, the second stage of the programme is being carried out and provides targeted technical support to five countries.¹⁷

36. In Latin America, gender-responsive budgeting has been introduced in many countries, including Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Peru and the Plurinational State of Bolivia. Budget guidelines issued by the ministries of planning, economy or finance in a number of those countries require sectoral ministries and local governments to allocate budgets for programmes addressing gender equality concerns. In Ecuador, a budget classifier was developed by the Ministry of Finance specifically to track the Government's allocations and spending towards the equal opportunity plan. In addition, several academic institutions are now contributing to building the capacity of civil servants in the area of gender-responsive planning and budgeting. Academic institutions such as the Latin American School of Social Sciences offer courses on gender and macroeconomics and gender-responsive budgeting to civil servants from the departments of planning and budgeting in Ecuador. At the local level, the participatory budget processes adopted by a number of countries in the region, especially in Ecuador and the Plurinational State of Bolivia, served as an entry point for women to engage actively in local policymaking, through local hearings and consultations with civil society organizations. Similarly, women's organizations in Brazil were successful in urging the Government to expand the financial resources for programmes on women's health and violence against women.¹⁸

37. In Morocco, efforts have been made since 2002 to integrate gender equality concerns into planning and budgeting instruments and processes as part of the public finance management systems and public administration reform. For three consecutive years starting in 2007, the budget guidelines issued by the Prime Minister included recommendations in relation to addressing gender equality concerns through sectoral plans and budgets. A report on gender is annexed to the annual budget, in which sectoral ministries report on their performance with regard to gender-sensitive indicators. Under the leadership of the Ministry of Finance, a comprehensive capacity development approach has evolved and contributed to strengthening the capacity of planning and budgeting staff in the Ministry of Finance and sectoral ministries. The Ministry of Finance has also actively facilitated South-South learning with a range of countries, including Ecuador, Haiti and Senegal.¹⁹

38. In Rwanda, the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning is taking the lead on the country's efforts to mainstream a gender perspective in national planning and budgeting processes. In response to the high demand for capacity development, the Rwandan School of Finance and Banking has developed a training programme on gender-responsive economic policy management for budget and planning officers, with a focus on poverty reduction strategies and macroeconomic policies. The course prepares participants to understand the linkages between macroeconomic policies and gender inequality. At the sectoral level, Rwanda has sought to integrate

¹⁶ UNIFEM (now UN-Women), *How Can Aid Be Gender-Responsive in the Context of the New Aid Modalities?*, Gender Responsive Budgeting and Aid Effectiveness Knowledge Briefs Series (New York, 2009).

¹⁷ Cameroon, Nepal, Peru, Rwanda and the United Republic of Tanzania.

¹⁸ Based on inputs from UN-Women.

¹⁹ Ibid.

a gender perspective into the agriculture sector by supporting an umbrella of community-based civil society organizations to develop capacity on gender-sensitive budget analysis and budget tracking.²⁰

39. In the United Republic of Tanzania, under the leadership of the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs, capacity development efforts are targeting economists and budget officers in selected ministries, departments and agencies to apply gender-responsive budgeting at the sector level and align sector programmes with gender equality indicators in the country's national strategy for growth and reduction of poverty. Moreover, five countries in Africa²¹ are currently investing in improving women's access to resources and services at the local level, through gender-responsive planning, programming and budgeting to better respond to women's priorities.²²

40. In Nepal, the Ministry of Finance introduced gender-responsive budgeting in 2007-2008 within the overall reform of the budgetary system and required ministries to categorize their programme budgets according to the extent to which they supported gender equality using five indicators: women's capacity development; women's participation in programme formulation and implementation; benefit incidence of public expenditures on women; support to women's employment and income generation; and positive impact on women's time use and care work. The budget categorization has facilitated the establishment of a monitoring system that allows greater institutional accountability for the strengthening of results-oriented management and the continued use of gender-responsive budget analysis to inform planning and programming. A gender-responsive budget committee oversees the initiative.²³

41. Evidence suggests that gender-responsive budgeting has helped address the gaps between Government commitments on achieving gender equality goals and the allocation of resources; promote accountability on the use of public resources to women; and increase the transparency of policy processes through the participation of civil society. Moreover, gender-responsive budgeting initiatives have made contributions in other areas, including building the planning and budgeting capacities of Government agencies, especially in the context of budget reform; introducing policy changes and developing operational frameworks to mainstream gender perspectives into budgeting systems; promoting the participation of gender equality advocates in planning and budgeting processes; and supporting gender-responsive budget monitoring initiatives by civil society.²⁴

IV. Integrating a gender perspective into the United Nations Development Assistance Framework

42. The United Nations makes concerted efforts to help Member States to integrate a gender perspective in their development strategies, including through the United Nations Development Assistance Framework, a common strategic framework for the

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Mozambique, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone and the United Republic of Tanzania.

²² Based on inputs from UN-Women.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

operational activities of the United Nations system at the country level. The Framework is formulated based on the analytical and collaborative effort of the Common Country Assessment, which examines the national development situation and identifies key development issues. The Framework provides a collective, coherent and integrated United Nations system response to national development priorities within the framework of the Millennium Development Goals as well as other internationally agreed development goals.

43. Since the first roll-out of development assistance frameworks in the late 1990s, efforts have been made to strengthen gender perspectives within development assistance frameworks and common country assessments. To review the progress of gender mainstreaming in the assessment/framework process, multiple studies have been commissioned, with the most recent one examining 51 assessments/frameworks completed between 2006-2009.²⁵ Gender equality was highlighted as a cross-cutting theme and gender equality outcomes were specifically delineated in slightly over half of the 51 frameworks reviewed. All the assessments were found to cite relevant gender-differentiated data, especially data on women's health and girls' education.

44. Planning and programming concentrated heavily on the two traditional areas of women's health and girls' education, though increasingly development assistance frameworks also focused on women's political participation. About one half of the frameworks focused on strengthening women's voices and participation in decision-making. Very few addressed women's livelihood issues and access to productive resources.²⁶

45. Addressing violence against women has increased in importance, with about one quarter of all development assistance frameworks including it in the priority outcome areas,²⁷ compared with relatively little attention received in earlier generations of frameworks.²⁸ Surprisingly, very few frameworks made substantive reference to country experiences in implementing the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and reporting thereon, either as a diagnostic or accountability tool. Moreover, while many countries cited traditional norms and practices that discriminated against women as barriers to women's ability to choose and participate in decision-making, few proposed concrete measures or activities to address them.²⁹

46. The most progress has been achieved in the area of monitoring and evaluation. Significant improvement was made over earlier generations of development assistance frameworks in areas including developing clear gender equality outcomes, formulating gender equality outputs connected to other outcome areas, and making clear connections between what needed to be measured and the indicators in the monitoring and evaluation frameworks.³⁰

47. The study identified the following factors that contributed to the better incorporation of gender equality priorities in development assistance frameworks:

²⁵ Study commissioned by the United Nations Development Group Task Team on Gender Equality on strengthening gender equality in United Nations development frameworks (New York, 2010).

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Study commissioned by the United Nations Development Group Task Team on Gender Equality on gender analysis and gender mainstreaming in common country programming (New York, 2006).

²⁹ United Nations Development Group Task Team on Gender Equality, 2010.

³⁰ Ibid.

strong senior management support and adequate resources for gender theme groups; a cogent analysis of key issues linked with clear programme outcomes; a robust implementation process and progress tracking mechanism; clearly articulated gender equality outputs and indicators; strong technical expertise to address gender equality issues during the preparation of the frameworks; and mechanisms to specify the allocation of resources to gender-related activities.³¹

48. Despite being identified as a limitation in the previous review conducted in 2006,³² information on resources allocated specifically for gender equality purposes continued to be lacking. In general, few development assistance frameworks specified the amount or percentage of resources allocated to gender equality outcomes either as a separate area of work or as part of achieving other framework outcomes. In the latter case, resources were allocated per output, but it was difficult to determine the allocations for gender equality and women's empowerment within the outputs. The highest proportion of funds allocated specifically to gender equality in a Framework was 9 per cent, but the average was between 3 and 4 per cent.³³

49. Strong commitments to gender equality in policy guidance and guidelines are critical to strengthen gender-responsive planning and programming. The common country assessment/United Nations Development Assistance Framework guidelines, first developed by the United Nations Development Group in 1999 and most recently revised in 2010, recognize gender mainstreaming and targeted gender-specific interventions as key strategies of United Nations-supported analysis and strategic planning, and include gender equality as one of the five interrelated programming principles that must be applied for the country analysis and preparation of the frameworks.³⁴

50. The guidelines emphasize alignment with national development priorities and strategies as well as partnership with women's groups and gender equality advocates in the preparation of frameworks.³⁵ Although about one half of the 51 frameworks demonstrated clear linkages to national development priorities, only a small number reported involvement of national machineries for gender equality and consultations with women's organizations as part of the process.³⁶

51. Many country teams utilized gender theme groups as the main coordination mechanism to ensure that gender dimensions were reflected in frameworks. While research has shown that having a strong gender theme group contributes to better integration of a gender perspective in frameworks,³⁷ United Nations country teams, in some regions, are gradually shifting towards theme groups that mirror the framework priority areas that often do not include gender equality as a standalone outcome.

52. Gender theme groups are often responsible for ensuring a gender perspective in development assistance frameworks and other United Nations country development programmes. In some countries, gender theme groups are also involved in the

³¹ Ibid.

³² United Nations Development Group Task Team on Gender Equality, 2006.

³³ United Nations Development Group Task Team on Gender Equality, 2010.

³⁴ United Nations Development Group, "How to prepare a United Nations development assistance framework: guidelines for United Nations country teams" (New York, 2010).

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ United Nations Development Group Task Team on Gender Equality, 2010.

³⁷ United Nations Development Group Task Team on Gender Equality, 2006.

formulation of national development strategies by providing technical and analytical assistance to national Governments. For instance, in Viet Nam, the Gender Programme Coordination Group coordinated a gender analysis of the draft 2011-2015 national development strategy. While many gender theme groups function as a United Nations inter-agency coordination mechanism, there are an increasing number that are co-chaired by the country's national machinery, with participation from Government and civil society representatives, as well as theme groups that are co-chaired with donors and other stakeholders. The Gender Programme Coordination Group in Viet Nam, for instance, has been jointly chaired by UN-Women and the country's national machinery for gender equality since 2008.³⁸

53. To ensure accountability in integrating gender equality in development assistance frameworks, the guidelines mention gender audits and United Nations Development Group Performance Indicators on Gender Equality as key tools for assessing progress on gender mainstreaming at an operational level. The gender audit methodology, developed by ILO, uses a self-assessment approach to monitor and evaluate the achievement of gender equality based on objective data and stakeholders' perceptions. In 2008, United Nations country teams were urged to establish a baseline for their performance, using the United Nations Development Group Performance Indicators on Gender Equality, together with the gender audit methodology, to measure changes over time. As a result, about 25 country teams started to undertake the assessment in 2008 and, by the end of 2010, 14 country teams completed the assessment³⁹ and were in the process of implementing their findings to achieve a stronger response to gender equality.⁴⁰

54. Another related accountability mechanism of the United Nations system is the annual report of the resident coordinator, in which the performance of country teams is reviewed annually. In 2006, the template and guidance of the resident coordinator annual report were strengthened by including a section on gender equality, in order to capture more systematically those results that align with the request by the triennial comprehensive policy review (General Assembly resolution 59/250).

55. Since 2004 the annual reports of resident coordinators have been reviewed by UNIFEM (now UN-Women) staff, to track trends in reporting on gender-related issues. The annual reviews have shown a significant increase in reporting by United Nations country teams on gender equality initiatives. The highest rate of increase has been in reporting on those initiatives aimed at ending violence against women, from 28 country teams reporting in 2004 to 96 in 2009. There are many factors that could have contributed to the increase, including the campaign of the Secretary-General entitled "UNiTE to end violence against women" and growing Government demand in response to the advocacy of women's human rights defenders. The support provided to national gender equality machineries for capacity development saw a fivefold increase during 2004-2009, with 53 resident coordinators reporting country team efforts in 2009, compared with 11 in 2004. Assistance to programmes that strengthen reproductive health and reduce maternal mortality, and support to reporting on the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms

³⁸ Based on inputs from UN-Women.

³⁹ The assessment reports of the 14 country teams using the United Nations Development Group Performance Indicators on Gender Equality can be found on the website: <http://www.undg.org/index.cfm?P=222&SO=DATE#s2>.

⁴⁰ United Nations Development Group Task Team on Gender Equality, 2010.

of Discrimination against Women and the Beijing Platform for Action also increased significantly over the same period (see E/2011/112 and UNW/2011/9). A number of specific funding mechanisms such as the Spanish Millennium Development Goal Achievement Fund and the United Nations Trust Fund to End Violence against Women have contributed to the increase in joint gender equality programming (see UNW/2011/9).

V. Role of donors in integrating a gender perspective in development assistance

56. The aid architecture landscape has changed significantly in the past few years since the adoption in 2005 of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness. Seeking to improve the management and delivery of official development assistance, the Paris Declaration outlines a number of commitments by donors and development partners, building on five principles, including national ownership, harmonization, alignment, managing for results and mutual accountability. However, the Paris Declaration has been criticized for being gender-blind as the targets and indicators identified therein do not place sufficient emphasis on achieving gender-responsive outcomes nor do they ensure the gender-responsiveness of processes and instruments.

57. In 2008, in response to the call for a gender perspective in the aid effectiveness agenda, donor countries adopted the Accra Agenda for Action, which has shown improvement in linking aid management systems with human rights and gender equality standards. Donors recognized the importance of gender equality in aid and development effectiveness, and agreed to ensure that development policies and programmes should be designed and implemented in ways consistent with their international commitments on gender equality.

58. In 2011, the Paris Declaration Monitoring Survey included for the first time an optional module on gender equality.⁴¹ Survey responses⁴² highlighted donors' efforts to align with partner countries' gender equality priorities. Nevertheless, donors did not allocate adequate human and financial resources to fully implement their commitments on gender equality. The use of sex-disaggregated data was found to be related to an enhanced focus on gender mainstreaming and increased budget allocations for gender equality and women's empowerment. However, sex-disaggregated data were rarely collected systematically and limited support was provided by donors for collecting such data. In addition, sex-disaggregated data were not always used to guide the decision-making process.

59. More concerted efforts are needed to ensure that the commitments of Governments towards gender equality and women's empowerment are fully reflected in the design, implementation and monitoring processes of all official development assistance. The Fourth High-level Forum on Aid Effectiveness, to be

⁴¹ Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, "Findings and messages from the gender equality module of the 2011 Paris Declaration Monitoring Survey", Paris, 2011. Available from http://www.gender-budgets.org/index.php?option=com_joomdoc&task=doc_details&gid=1253&Itemid=565.

⁴² A total of 24 countries responded to the optional module on gender equality: Albania, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Comoros, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, Gabon, Honduras, Kenya, Malawi, Mali, Morocco, Mozambique, Nepal, Niger, Peru, Republic of Moldova, Rwanda, Togo and Zambia.

held in November 2011 in Busan, Republic of Korea, offers an opportunity for Member States to go beyond the political affirmation of the centrality of gender equality to nationally owned development assistance, and move towards integrating gender-responsive budgeting into the aid management system and building capacities of national Governments, in order to implement gender-responsive planning, budgeting and monitoring.

60. Apart from the aid effectiveness agenda, donors and international organizations have also undertaken initiatives to strengthen gender equality in development cooperation. For instance, during 2007-2010, the European Commission, UN-Women and the ILO International Training Centre implemented the European Community/United Nations Partnership on Gender Equality for Development and Peace programme in 12 aid recipient countries, including post-conflict countries.⁴³ Among other objectives, the programme sought to ensure full integration of gender equality and women's human rights in the national development processes and cooperation programmes supported by the European Commission. While the programme was found to be effective in preparing the ground for changes in institutions and behaviours, continued efforts are needed in order to make a profound and sustainable change in the behaviours of the European Commission and other donors in relation to gender equality and aid effectiveness.⁴⁴ Future work should follow a strategic and multipronged approach that addresses both short- and long-term needs with a range of interventions, including training, technical assistance, resource development and accessibility of information.

61. In 2010, the European Union adopted its Plan of Action on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Development (2010-2015),⁴⁵ which aims to reinforce coordination within the European Union regarding gender equality policies in development cooperation with partner countries, in order to achieve a greater impact on the ground. The Plan further commits the European Union to take advantage of the pioneering work carried out by the European Community/United Nations Partnership on Gender Equality for Development and Peace, and by the Network on Gender Equality of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development's Development Assistance Committee in the area of mainstreaming gender perspectives in the aid effectiveness agenda. It offers a framework for the European Union to renew its commitment to gender equality.

62. A number of countries have made a commitment to mainstreaming gender equality in all stages of development cooperation programmes to promote human rights, sustainable development, poverty eradication and economic growth. In Denmark, gender equality is one of five priorities in its strategy for development cooperation entitled "Freedom from poverty — freedom to change", which was launched in 2010 and builds on the momentum created by the Danish campaign to promote Goal 3 of the Millennium Development Goals. The strategic objectives are to ensure equal rights, equal access to and control over resources and equal opportunities for political and economic influence for women and men.

⁴³ Cameroon, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Ghana, Honduras, Indonesia, Kyrgyzstan, Nepal, Nicaragua, Papua New Guinea, Suriname and Ukraine.

⁴⁴ UN-Women final report to the European Commission on the European Community/United Nations Partnership on Gender Equality for Development and Peace.

⁴⁵ See European Union Plan of Action on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Development (2010-2015).

63. In Spain, gender in development is one of five key priorities of its Cooperation Plan 2009-2012, which aims at strengthening gender equality through sector and cross-cutting actions in cooperation programmes and projects and by promoting equality policies. Spain's strategic equality plan for 2008-2011 explicitly mentions gender mainstreaming as its guiding principle and lists development aid as one of its strategic objectives. It includes the call for a gender impact analysis of any normative or executive decision-making and the need to change political and technical institutional procedures accordingly.

64. The development of mechanisms and tools on gender equality issues has been critical to strengthening sector programmes and building the capacity of staff working on effective gender mainstreaming. For instance, the New Zealand Aid Programme aims at improving the gender-related outcomes of its development assistance programmes by providing staff members with gender analysis tools, offering gender mainstreaming training, monitoring activities, and recruiting a gender specialist to promote gender mainstreaming. The Danish International Aid Agency and the Department of Gender Equality developed e-learning materials that have been incorporated in the staff development plans of several ministries. With European Union funding, the Department on Gender Equality is developing a web-based tool that can support public authorities and institutions in their work on gender mainstreaming in all public planning and administration. Since 2005, Japan has appointed gender focal points in its 96 embassies in recipient countries in order to monitor good practices in gender-sensitive projects.

65. Donors, bilateral development partners and international organizations play a key role in ensuring that financial resources allocated for gender equality purposes are sufficient and increased at both the national and international levels. In 1997, to enhance the capacity and accountability of donors in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment through aid, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development developed the gender equality policy marker as part of the Creditor Reporting System, a database used by the Development Assistance Committee to facilitate monitoring and coordination of the Committee members' activities.

66. The gender equality policy marker provides a classification system to identify the extent to which programmes, funds or activities benefit gender equality and women's empowerment, based on a marking system with three values: "principal objective", "significant objective", and "not targeted to the policy objective". An activity that targets gender equality as a "principal objective" means that gender equality is an explicit objective of the activity and fundamental in its design. "Significant objective" indicates that gender equality is an important but secondary objective of the activity, and is not one of the principal reasons for undertaking the activity. "Not targeted" means that the activity is screened against, but is found not to be targeted to, the policy objective.

67. In recent years, efforts have been made to adopt a gender marker within the United Nations system, including UNDP, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, UNFPA, UNICEF, and the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund.⁴⁶ Those efforts have shown the gender marker system to be more than a measuring tool, and that its application has led to

⁴⁶ Based on input from UN-Women.

enhanced quality of programming across sectors responding to the different realities of women and girls.

68. In addition to the gender marker system, individual donor countries also track resource allocations in their development assistance programmes. In 2009, about 22 per cent of the total development assistance of Denmark was used for financing activities that, directly or indirectly, aimed at promoting gender equality and women's empowerment. The allocations for gender-related activities are registered either as targeted gender interventions or as mainstreamed interventions. The Government of Norway reported that NOK 868 million was channelled through 89 partners (multilateral institutions and Norwegian non-governmental organizations) working on economic development and trade, for which the promotion of women's rights and gender equality was either a main or a secondary objective.

VI. Conclusions and recommendations

69. The achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women is essential to achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals. National planning processes offer important opportunities to address gender perspectives. While progress has been uneven, Governments have undertaken many initiatives, such as identifying gender issues as a priority or a cross-cutting issue that is systematically mainstreamed across all sectors in all stages of the policy process. Nevertheless, in some countries, gender perspectives are only partially integrated in specific sectoral areas.

70. Beyond awareness-raising, capacity-building and training activities, concerted efforts are needed for the effective incorporation of gender perspectives into national development policies and strategies. Common strategies include developing capacity and expertise in line ministries as well as in national mechanisms for gender equality; strengthening accountability, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms; ensuring sufficient human and financial resources; and promoting the participation of civil society, particularly women's organizations, in the national development planning processes. Gender-responsive budgeting has been developed as an effective tool to ensure that adequate resources are allocated for the achievement of gender equality goals. That requires technical expertise to be developed in a range of ministries, including ministries of finance.

71. The United Nations system and donors are increasingly taking measures to integrate gender perspectives in all development cooperation work, including through their support for national development plans. Emphasis should be placed on integrating gender perspectives in all development cooperation work, building on the national ownership of gender-mainstreaming initiatives. Measures to ensure the consideration of gender perspectives in development assistance include: mechanisms to track resources allocated to achieve gender equality goals; coordination mechanisms with a gender equality focus; and accountability mechanisms to measure and track performance. The provision of bilateral and multilateral funding must be well coordinated and clearly targeted for gender equality purposes, and gender perspectives must be systematically integrated into the aid effectiveness agenda.

72. The General Assembly may wish to call on Member States and all relevant actors to undertake the following actions:

Gender mainstreaming efforts

- Systematically integrate a gender perspective into the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of all national development strategies and policies and sectoral plans, and ensure the alignment between national action plans on gender equality and national development strategies
- Build on lessons learned, expand and deepen efforts to mainstream a gender perspective in the United Nations Common Country Assessments and Development Assistance Frameworks
- Strengthen efforts by UN-Women to work with United Nations country teams in helping Member States to integrate a gender perspective into national development policies and strategies

Participation and accountability

- Strengthen the impact and contribution of national mechanisms for gender equality in all stages of national development planning processes and across all sectoral plans
- Strengthen the role and capacity of gender theme groups by supporting United Nations country teams on gender equality issues and facilitating a gender perspective in national development strategies and plans
- Enhance the transparency of and participation in national development planning processes by involving civil society, especially women's organizations, in the formulation and monitoring of national development strategies and other related policy instruments

Resource allocation and tracking

- Develop and adopt effective measuring mechanisms to monitor and track the national, United Nations and donor resources allocated to achieve gender equality goals
- Strengthen capacities for gender mainstreaming by allocating adequate financial and human resources within line ministries, establishing and/or strengthening dedicated gender equality units, providing capacity development for technical staff, and developing tools and guidelines
- Ensure that donors allocate adequate resources for the full implementation of their commitments on gender equality, expand the scope of donor support provided to gender equality priorities across all sectors and in strategic areas, and improve the impact and quality of financing for gender equality

Measures and tools

- Develop and strengthen methodologies and tools for systematic gender-responsive budgeting across all sectors in national development planning and budgeting processes, and for effective application of gender-responsive budgeting in donor practices, including joint coordination mechanisms

- Improve and systematize the collection, analysis and dissemination of sex-disaggregated data, enhance capacity development in that regard, and develop gender-sensitive indicators to support policymaking and national systems for monitoring and reporting on progress and impacts

Least developed countries

- Ensure the full implementation of the commitments on gender equality in the Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries